

a focus on their spatial aspects. The title of this chapter is slightly misleading, as the main source on which it is based, royal letters of pardon, can be used effectively as the foundation for a discussion of the ways in which criminals used Paris (as the book demonstrates), but they shed little light on dozens of other aspects of the spatial practices in everyday life. Nonetheless, the chapter clearly argues how space was experienced differently by someone migrating to work, someone going out to have fun, or someone committing a crime.

All in all, Novák's book constitutes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the social history of medieval Paris. The vocabulary is consistent and easily understandable, which makes the book an enjoyable read even for non-specialists. When reading the book, one has the feeling that the author (unlike many of the contemporary citizens of Paris at the time) would have been able to navigate the crowded streets of medieval Paris easily. This is not such a simple task for the reader at times, however, so here and there, more detailed maps could have added to the reasoning in the different sections, and even the maps which were included are sometimes difficult to understand. As it was written in Hungarian, for the moment, the book is available only to a very small group of scholars interested in the social history of medieval Paris. However, it could also be read as a handbook which offers a methodology to the study of medieval and early modern practices of space. The book makes note of a number of Central European parallels in the use of urban spaces, which scholars of the region hopefully will study in further detail. Even if scholars who read Hungarian will make good use of the book, it would clearly be advantageous to have it translated into French (or English) in order to ensure that it reaches the audience for whom it is of primary importance. Hopefully, this will happen in the near future.

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Batthyány Boldizsár titkos tudománya: Alkímia, botanika és könyvgyűjtés a tizenhatodik századi Magyarországon [Bolidzsár Batthyány's secret science: Alchemy, botany, and book collecting in sixteenth-century Hungary]. By Dóra Bobory. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2018. 322 pp.

Boldizsár Batthyány is one of the most intriguing figures in the intellectual history of sixteenth-century Hungary. A highly educated patron of the sciences and arts, he imported a great many fruits of contemporary European culture to Hungary to his courts at Szalónak (Schlaining, Austria) and Németújvár (Güssing), all this in a time of war in Hungarian history. Despite his significance, relatively few scholars have studied his life and work in the twentieth century, and those who did for the most part wrote summaries about his life and courtly culture, of which only some aspects have been explored in depth (like cooperation between Batthyány and Carolus Clusius and the bookish culture). Dóra Bobory's monograph provides what is for the moment the most detailed account of Batthyány's life and the branches of natural philosophy which interested him and the people in his milieu. The predecessor to this book is a monograph by Bobory entitled *The Sword and the Crucible* (2009), which is based on her dissertation. However, Bobory not only translated the English monograph into Hungarian, she also extended and developed it further, incorporating new letters and editions of correspondence, as well as insights based on recent international secondary literature. The monograph is the seventh piece in the series "Microhistory," launched by L'Harmattan Publishing House, and the first part of the prologue is devoted to a discussion of the benefits of microhistoriography as a method. Indeed, the sources do allow the exploration of several milieus within Batthyány's world which mirror relevant macro phenomena of Hungarian and European cultural history. Furthermore, Bobory outlines the historical vicissitudes and the present state of the group of sources on which she drew (Batthyány's private correspondence, mostly in the National Archives of Hungary). I must note here that there are other documents related to Batthyány's court which could provide further data on the topic.

Both the title of the first chapter ("Imprints of a Life"), which is essentially biographical, and its first paragraph emphasize that the sources allow only a fragmentary reconstruction of Batthyány's life. Nonetheless, a large part of the first chapter, which surveys Batthyány's childhood and youth until he became a magnate in 1570, provides a relatively detailed and colorful story. As for his

studies, several preceptors of different nationalities taught Batthyány (who stayed mostly at the Németújvár court of his great-uncle, Ferenc Batthyány, ban of Croatia and Slavonia). He then continued his studies in Vienna. His most important and, for a member of the contemporary Hungarian aristocracy, unique experience was his journey to France (1559–61), where he was involved with the milieu of the royal court and the multinational intellectual life of Paris, which brought him into contact with the intensifying religious conflicts. The blank spaces of the biography have been aptly covered by digressions concerning Batthyány's time and milieu, such as the book merchant Jean Aubry's impact on the interests of aristocrats or contemporary dressing customs. There are, however, some data or conjectures that are not supported by references (e.g. that he probably served at the Viennese court after returning from France, p.55). However, a greater problem lies in the fact that two of the important years in the history of Batthyány's life, 1542 as the "probable" year of his birth and 1573 as the year in which his son, Ferenc, was born, are both highly questionable in light of information available in a genealogy by András Koltai entitled *Batthyány Ádám: Egy magyar főúr udvara a XVII. század közepén* (2012). The other part of the chapter does not proceed in a chronological order, but rather offers an overview of the major aspects of Batthyány's adult life: the traces of his attraction to Protestantism, his distanced and contradictory relationship to the Habsburg court, and his military engagements against the Turks. Little attention is given to other considerations, e.g. his activity as a landlord and his relationships with the foreign, especially Austrian, aristocracy, although related letters survive in abundance. Naturally, one could hardly have expected Bobory to include all non-cultural aspects in one chapter, and this would have required considerable additional research, but it would have been preferable had she indicated that there are sources which make possible further research on other fields of Batthyány's adult life. In sum, the biographical chapter complements our knowledge at many points (concerning mainly Batthyány's youth), and this rich outline provides details concerning several aspects (Batthyány's language skills, his foreign relations, etc.) which constitute useful background information for the following chapters on culture.

In chapter Two, Bobory discusses Batthyány's library with particular consideration of his known books on natural philosophy (enumerated item by item in the Appendix). She embeds the aristocrat's book collecting activity in the Hungarian (and partly in the international) context of bookish culture and also offers an overview of the development of the immense library, the

uses of books, the potential manuscripts, and the future fate of the library. A problematic point in the otherwise well-rounded summary is the classification of books. In addition to works by the "classical authors," the library did in fact include a number of grammatical and rhetorical works written or edited by humanists. Cosmography and geography are not mentioned, although they are at least as important in the library as, for instance, astronomy/astrology (into the category of which the philosophical didactic poem *Zodiacus vitae*, classified as a "horoscope" by Bobory, cannot be put). Bobory impressively surveys the many branches of alchemy (related to medicine, among other sciences) and their presence in the library. She offers more than an overview of groups of books. A panorama opens up on contemporary European alchemy and its bookish culture. The same applies to the focused discussion of Paracelsianism. Bobory's narrative of the summaries on Paracelsus, his relationship to Hungary, and the spread of his ideas is informative and broadly supported by the international secondary literature. One significant observation made in the book is that, alongside the Paracelsians, their adversaries are almost as well represented in the library. The library being a cross-section of contemporary culture, the whole issue is highly important and requires further research. In a recent study ("Adalékok Batthyány [III.] Boldizsár könyvtárához," *Magyar Könyvszemle* [2018]), I discuss the topic from these perspectives, and I call attention to several other minor topics represented in the library.

Chapter Three focuses on the actual practice of alchemy and medicine. In these fields, Batthyány cooperated with several humanists/naturalists, primarily the poet and alchemist Elias Corvinus, the Styrian aristocrat Felician von Herberstein, and the physicians Nicolaus Pistorius and Johannes Homelius. Bobory refers to them as the members of an informal circle around Batthyány, although it is in fact questionable to what extent the complicated network of relationships should be considered a "circle." Pistorius, for instance, stands somewhat apart, while there were others around Batthyány who dealt with alchemy, such as the Styrian nobleman Balthasar Wagner. This discussion is followed by a colorful overview of several topics related to natural philosophy based on correspondence. The Batthyány family founded a mining company and dealt with mint owners, mine inspectors, and even alchemist adventurers. As for medicine, diagnoses and prescriptions were often given in letters or in the course of lay consultations as a substitute for consultations with professionals due to the general lack of physicians. Furthermore, both traditional and exotic or innovative methods were used. The subchapter on alchemy surveys the

circumstances and conditions of Batthyány's alchemical activity rather than the activity itself (the laboratory, the instruments, the acquisition of raw materials, his assistants and books, and an enumeration of the main procedures and two uncontextualized examples for experiments written down in letters). The correspondence includes several prescriptions and descriptions of experiments, along with contemplations about nature and its elements. In the future, it would be worthwhile to make use of this rich alchemical source material in depth, although this difficult task would be better entrusted to a research group than a single scholar.

Batthyány also patronized Carolus Clusius, Europe's most famous contemporary botanist. Their cooperation enriched Batthyány's garden, and the study of the plants and mushrooms of *Pannonia* resulted in pioneering botanical works. Chapter Four completes at some points what was already known about their cooperation. Bobory incorporates some additional letters into her research, and she provides new data and conjectures concerning both the intellectual historical context and Clusius's activity itself. The most important result is perhaps the gathering of Batthyány's demonstrable garden plants. Chapter Five touches on some further aspects of the culture of his court, including the images painted after his death (which were symbolic expressions of his interests and prestige), his relationship with his friends and clients, and the main characteristics of his court. Finally, the epilogue summarizes the extent to which Batthyány, as a collector and "prince-practitioner," represented the newest Central European cultural trends.

I would be remiss not to observe that the translation of the Latin, German, and French letters is questionable at several points. Most of the quotations I checked at random contain one or more significant errors in translation (here I can only refer with the footnote numbers to some examples: 347, 654, 724, 734, 760, 811, 926, 931), and sometimes the summaries of parts of the letters suggest misunderstandings of the text (e.g. 837, 840, 904, 925, 931). For instance, the "unknown painter" on whom one of the subchapters focuses did not have to complete the work in Batthyány's castle "in 8–10 days," but rather had 8–10 days in Vienna (931). (There are also mistaken references to letters, but these mistakes probably are just slips of the pen.) It would have been preferable to have attached the transcriptions of the original texts at least to all the literal quotations (even if a partial edition of the correspondence is to be published soon), so that the reader would be able to check whether the translation and transcription are correct; this would not have significantly enlarged the book. These mistakes are

regrettable, since the monograph in general provides a vivid and multifaceted presentation of Boldizsár Batthyány and the natural philosophical aspects of his courtly culture. It adds significantly to the existing secondary literature and offers a rich discussion of the relevant issues in an international context. Bobory's style is also enjoyable, and both scholars and lay readers can benefit from the work, which demonstrates the zeal and excitement with which she pursued her research. The design of the book is also attractive. It includes eighteen color plates which conjure the atmosphere of Batthyány's age and culture.

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